



# GLOSSARY CORRELATION INDEX NUMBER BENCHMARK SUSTAINABILITY

*You can do what you have to do, and sometimes you can do  
it even better than you think you can.*

— Former President Jimmy Carter



## GLOSSARY

**Accident:** A preventable injury.

**Advocacy:** The promotion of policies, regulations and programs to improve health by mobilizing public sentiment to pressure systems.

**Age-adjusted death rate:** A rate calculated to adjust for differences in the distribution of ages in separate populations. The distribution of ages in a population can increase or decrease the likelihood of death in that population. When comparing mortality data from different populations, rates adjusted for differences in age distribution are used because age is the most significant characteristic related to disease and death.

**Assistive technology:** Technology that is used to increase the communication or mobility of persons with disabilities.

**Association:** The statistical dependence between two variables.

**Baseline:** The starting point for a comparison, usually taken before an intervention.

**Benchmark:** The measurement against which you will compare all others.

**Bias:** Anything that produces a systematic error. Also, the effect of a factor that was not anticipated by the researcher that effects the outcome variable.

**Birth defect:** An abnormality in structure, function or body metabolism that is present at birth.

**Birth rate (crude birth rate):** A measure of the number of live births in a population during a given period of time. Birth rates are calculated by dividing the number of live births occurring in a given population during one year by the estimated population, then multiplying the quotient by 1,000.

**Behavioral Risk Factor Social Survey (BRFSS):** An anonymous national survey conducted by phone interview that asks about behaviors and behavioral determinants.

**Brownfields:** Abandoned, idle, or underused industrial or commercial sites where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or potential environmental contamination perceived by the community.

**Cancer:** A term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. Cancer cells can invade nearby tissue and can spread through the bloodstream and lymphatic system to other parts of the body.

**Case:** In medical terms, it is a person with an illness or related health event, i.e. injury. In studies, cases are the subjects, persons or things, from which data is collected. A case is the smallest unit of analysis.

**Carcinogen:** A substance or agent that is known to cause cancer.

**Child abuse and neglect:** Abuse or neglect of children as determined by the state's office of Child Protective Services.



**Community:** A specific group of people, often living in a define geographical area, who share a common culture, values, and norms and are arranged in a social structure according to relationships the community has developed over a period of time.

**Community capacity:** Characteristics of communities that affect their ability to identify, mobilize, and address social and public health problems.

**Community policing:** Policing with an emphasis on community-based problem solving; allows departments new opportunities for creative collaborations

**Confounding:** An effect that obscures the effects of another factor or variable.

**Contraception (birth control):** the means of pregnancy prevention. Contraceptive methods include permanent methods (i.e. male and female sterilization) and temporary methods (i.e. barrier, hormonal and behavioral).

**Control (group):** In studies, the group that has not received the treatment.

**Cotinine:** A chemical substance found in the blood of people exposed to tobacco smoke either through smoking or secondhand smoke.

**Correlation:** The extent to which things are related. An example of correlation is the increase or decrease of one variable in relation to change in another.

**Cumulative (frequency):** The total of a group or class.

**Data:** Numerical or non-numerical information points. Data are most often considered to be numerical or quantitative although transcripts and videotapes are also considered data in qualitative research.

**Data base:** Data organized for rapid retrieval and analysis, a consolidation of many records of single datum.

**Data point:** A single piece of data.

**Dental caries:** An infectious disease that results in cavitation of the tooth surface if not controlled.

**Depression:** A cognitive and emotional disorder causing thoughts of deprivation, frustration, rejection, humiliation or punishment. There are standard diagnosis scales for recognizing depression.

**Developmental disabilities:** A broad spectrum of impairments characterized by developmental delay and/or limitation in personal activity.

**Disability:** A reduction of a person's capacity to function in society.

**Emerging pathogen:** An illness-causing microorganism previously unknown to be a human pathogen, a foodborne pathogen not expected to occur in particular foods, or a pathogen that is dramatically increasing in prevalence.

**Environmental factor:** Factors in the air, water, soil or social context which is preventable and which increases the risk of an adverse health event.



**Epidemiology:** The study of distribution and determinants of health-related status or events and the application of this study to control of health problems.

**Essential public health services:** The public health services described in the Public Health in America (a collaborative statement define public health vision, mission and essential services) statement: monitoring health status; diagnosing and investigating health problems; informing; educating and empowering people; mobilizing community partnerships; developing policies and plans; enforcing laws and regulations; link people to needed services; conducting evaluations and conducting research.

**Fertility rate:** A rate that relates the total number of births (to women of all ages) in a population to the number of women most at risk of childbearing – those 15 through 44 years of age. The fertility rate is calculated by dividing the total number of live births occurring in a given population during one year by the estimated population of women aged 15 through 44 years, then multiplying the quotient by 1,000.

**Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS):** A cluster of structural and functional abnormalities found in infants and children as a result of alcohol consumption by the mother during pregnancy and characterized by growth retardation, facial malformations and central nervous system dysfunction.

**Fetal death:** The death of a fetus in utero at 20 weeks or more gestation. The fetal death rate is the number of fetal deaths in a population divided by the total of the live births and fetal death in the same population during the same time.

**Fetal mortality rate:** A measure of fetal deaths occurring in a population during a given period of time. Fetal mortality rates are calculated by dividing the number of fetal deaths in a given population during a given time period by the number of live births plus fetal deaths occurring in the population during the same time period, then multiplying the quotient by 1,000.

**Fish advisories:** Recommendations to limit consumption of certain species of fish taken from waters where chemical contaminants are present.

**Food-borne illness and food-borne disease:** Broad terms that encompass infection and intoxication caused by microbial or chemical contaminants in foods. Some food-borne illnesses are from a one-time intake of a sufficient number of microorganisms or toxin to cause illness. Other food-borne illnesses are the result of the intake of compounds over long periods of time.

**Food-borne disease outbreak:** The occurrence of two or more cases of a similar illness resulting from the ingestion of a common food.

**Genetic disorders:** The group of health conditions that result from genes passed to the embryo from the parents.

**Health education:** Seeks to promote healthy behaviors by informing and education individuals through the use of materials and structured activities.

**Healthy community:** A community that is continuously creating and improving those



physical and social environments and expanding those community resources that enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.

**Health improvement plan:** A series of timely and meaningful action steps that define and direct the distribution of the essential public health services in a specific State or community according to the gaps identified in the needs assessment.

**Healthy People 2000:** Objectives set by federal health officials for the nation's health goals for the year 2000.

**Healthy People 2010:** Objectives set by federal health officials for the nation's health goals for the year 2010.

**ICD-9 Codes:** A classification of diseases that categorizes morbidity and mortality based on information obtained from medical reports and vital statistics documents.

**Immunization:** Vaccines are biological substances that interact with the immune system and usually produce an immune response that is identical to that produced by the natural infection, you do not subject a person to full-blown disease or complications. Immunizations are the vehicle for vaccines to inoculate populations.

**Incarcerate:** To put in jail or imprison.

**Incidence:** Number of NEW cases of a disease occurring in the population during a specified period of time. The rate describes the extent that people within a population who do not have a disease develop the disease during a specific time period. It is the number of new case in a specific population over a set period of time.

**Index:** A group of measurements that collectively represent a phenomenon or issue.

**Indicator:** A numerical, ordinal, or representation that measures a factor. An indicator usually can be remeasured to show changes over time.

**Infant mortality (IM):** Death of an infant less than one year old. Most infant deaths are preventable. The risk of infant death is increased by giving birth at a very young age (<19 years) or older age (>40 years), leaving less than 2 years between births, or giving birth under conditions of poor maternal health or poor nutrition.

**Infant mortality rate (IMR):** A measure of deaths to infants under 1 year of age during a given period of time. Infant mortality rates are calculated by dividing the number of deaths to infants under 1 year of age occurring in a given population during one year by the number of live births occurring during that year, then multiplying the quotient by 1,000.

**Injury:** Unintentional or intentional damage to the body. Extreme forms may result in death. Injuries are understandable, predictable and preventable.

**Intended pregnancy:** A pregnancy that a woman states was wanted at the time of conception, irrespective of contraception use.



**Iron deficiency:** Having two or more consecutive test results of standard iron tests.

**Key indicator:** An indicator that has particular significance in a population or for a particular subject. Sometimes called the “leading indicator.”

**Leading causes of death:** A statistical representation of the most common causes of death reported on death certificates.

**Leading actual causes of death:** The behavior that contributes the leading causes of death.

**Low birthweight:** A live birth weighing less than 2,500 grams (5 pounds 8 ounces or 5.5 lbs.). The percent low birthweight is the number of these births in a population during a given time interval divided by the total number of live births reported in that population during the same time interval.

**Mammogram:** An x-ray of the breast which screens for unusual growths.

**Maternal death:** Death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of the pregnancy irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy.

**Maternal mortality:** A representation of deaths of women due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

**Maternal mortality rate:** A measure of deaths to women due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth during a given period of time. The maternal mortality rate is calculated by dividing the number of maternal deaths in a given time period by the number of live births in that same time period, then multiplying the quotient by 100,000.

**Mean:** A measure of central tendency. Sometimes the mean is called the arithmetic average. It is calculated by adding up all the observed values and dividing them by the sample size of the group.

**Mode:** A measure of central tendency. It is the value that is most often reported in a sample.

**Median:** A measure of central tendency. It is the 50th percentile value or the value at which 50 percent of all values fall above or below.

**Microbial infection:** Infection caused by bacteria, viruses or other microbes.

**NCHS list of 72 leading causes of death:** Extrapolated from the coding system of diseases, ICD-9 codes. On a national level, it is the 72 most common causes of death.

**Needs assessment:** A formal process to identify problems and assess the community’s capacity to address health and social service needs. The needs assessment will identify which populations, if any, are underserved by the providers in that community and it will provide information about resource distribution.

**Neonatal period:** The first 28 days of life.



**Neonatal mortality:** A representation of infant deaths occurring prior to the first 28 days of life. Deaths during this period are generally due to hereditary factors and factors affecting the mother before and during pregnancy. Three-quarters of these deaths are associated with low birthweight. The distinction between neonatal and postneonatal mortality has been blurred in recent years because of increased survival of premature infants due to advances in neonatology.

**Neonatal mortality rate:** A measure of deaths occurring to infants under 28 days of age during a given period of time. Neonatal mortality rates are calculated by dividing the number of deaths occurring to infants under 28 days of age in a given population during one year by the number of live births occurring during that year, then multiplying the quotient by 1,000. The rate is expressed as the number of deaths to infants under age 28 days, per 1,000 live births.

**Newborn Screenings:** Tests of newborn children for genetic and metabolic disorders.

**Pap test (or smear):** Microscopic examination of cells collected from the cervix. A pap test is used to detect changes that may be cancer and can show noncancerous conditions, such as inflammation or infection.

**Pathogen:** A microorganism that causes illness.

**People with disabilities:** Those persons identified as having a limitation in activities because of an impairment or health condition, usually defined as having a duration of 12 months.

**Percentage:** A proportion multiplied by 100

**Per capita:** Per person.

**Periodontal disease:** A syndrome of conditions caused by bacterial infection and resulting in inflammation and destruction of the supporting structures of the teeth.

**Perinatal mortality:** A representation of deaths of unborn fetuses after 20 weeks of gestation (stillbirths) and deaths within 7 days of birth. Perinatal mortality is influenced by conditions affecting the mother before and during pregnancy as well as problems of the infant (genetic or chromosomal problems, infectious, etc.).

**Perinatal mortality rate:** A measure of stillbirths (fetal deaths) plus deaths to infants under 7 days of age during a given period of time. Perinatal mortality rates are calculated by dividing the number of fetal deaths plus deaths to infants under 7 days of age occurring in a given population during one year by the number of stillbirths plus live births occurring during that year, then multiplying the quotient by 1,000.

**Pesticides:** A chemical that is used to kill pests, most commonly insects and rodents.

**Population at risk:** The total number of persons who are at risk for the disease or people who are cases and people who could become cases.

**Postneonatal mortality:** A representation of deaths occurring to infants aged 28



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days through 364 days. Postneonatal mortality is influenced by environmental factors, such as nutrition, hygiene, and accidents. The distinction between neonatal and postneonatal mortality has been blurred in recent years because of increased survival of premature infants due to advances in neonatology.

**Postneonatal mortality rate:** A measure of deaths occurring to infants aged 28 days through 364 days during a given period of time. Postneonatal mortality rates are calculated by dividing the number of deaths occurring to infants aged 28 days through 364 days in a given population during one year by the number of live births occurring during that year, then multiplying the quotient by 1,000.

**Premature birth:** A live birth that occurs prior to 37 weeks pregnancy.

**Prenatal care:** Health care, counseling and related services provided during pregnancy to assure the best possible health for both mother and child. Care should start in the first trimester and continue throughout pregnancy. One major focus of such care is screening/monitoring to identify conditions that might threaten the mother or the child. A second major focus is counseling and guidance relative to diet, alcohol, tobacco and other health concerns. Other services, for those who qualify, are social and financial counseling, WIC, and Medicaid.

**Prevalence:** The number of people in a population who have a certain disease, disorder or condition at any given time. It is a cross-sectional view, at a specific point in time.

**Preventable injury:** Unintentional or intentional damage to the body that could have been prevented.

**Primary data:** Data that are collected for the specific purpose of the research at hand.

**Primary prevention:** Halting the occurrence of a disease before it happens.

**Proportion:** Ratio in which the numerator is a subset for the denominator.

**Quality of Life (QOL):** A representation of the qualitative level of a person's life. There are many QOL indexes.

**Rate:** A ratio in which the calendar time enters both numerator and denominator. A rate is the number of specific health events in a given time period divided by the average population during that same time period, then multiplied by a number such as 1,000 or 100,000 to standardize the calculation so it easily can be compared with rates for other groups. Rates allow comparisons between different populations or one population at two different times.

**Ratio:** One number divided by another.

**Risk factor:** Something that increases a person's chance of developing a condition. An underlying factor in a person which is preventable and which leads to or increases the risk of an adverse health event. It is a characteristic that has been demonstrated statistically to be associated with a particular injury.





**Schizophrenia:** A biologically-based brain disorder characterized by loss of connection to reality and associated with affective, behavioral and intellectual disturbances.

**Screening:** Checking for a disease when there are no symptoms.

**Sealant:** A plastic coating applied to the chewing surface of the teeth, primarily to protect the surface molars from collecting food, bacteria or debris that would promote dental decay development.

**Secondary data:** Data that is collected by others or is already existing that is used by a researcher.

**Secondary prevention:** screenings and tests to identify the pathogenic states of people in order to prevent spread or disease progression.

**Spinal cord injury:** An acute traumatic lesion of neural elements in the spinal canal resulting in temporary or permanent sensory deficit, motor deficit or bowel or bladder dysfunction.

**Stakeholder:** A person or organization that has a reason to be interested in the results of planning.

**Social marketing:** Promotion or sustainment of positive behavior change by applying marketing principles to community intervention which sometimes involves mass media.

**Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS):** Sudden unexplained death of an infant from an unknown cause.

**Sustainability:** The ability to maintain an effort over a longer length. Usually sustainability refers to continued support in the community after a formal program has ended and alternative methods of funding need to be used.

**Target population:** The group of persons (usually those at high risk) that program intervention are designed to reach.

**Tertiary prevention:** Retarding or blocking the progression of a disability or a disease to prevent further illness.

**Traumatic Brain Injury:** An occurrence of injury to the head that is documented in a medical record with one or more of the following conditions attributable to the injury: decreased level of consciousness, amnesia, skull fracture, neurological abnormalities or intracranial lesion.

**Trend:** The value of a measured indicator over time.

**Underlying cause of death:** The disease or injury that initiated the sequence of events leading to death. An example of an underlying cause of death due to lung cancer is smoking tobacco.



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**Unintended pregnancy:** A general term that includes pregnancies that a woman states were mistimed or unwanted at the time of conception (not at the time of birth), irrespective of contraception use.

**Unintentional injury:** A type of injury that occurs without purposeful intent.

**Validity:** The ability of an indicator or a variable to measure what one wanted to measure. The example of a valid indicator is cigarette sales as a measure of tobacco consumption. When people buy cigarettes they are likely to use them. An indicator that is not valid would be reporting tobacco usage when interviewing young teens while their parents were present.

**Vector:** A vector is a living, nonhuman host to a disease-causing pathogen. Vectors include insects, like a fly or mosquito, or a small animal like a mouse or rat. Vectors transport, carry or serve the process of the disease.

**Very low birthrate:** A live birth weighing less than 1,500 grams (3 pounds 5 ounces or 3.3 lbs.). The percent very low birthweight is the number of these births in a population during a given time interval, divided by the total number of live births reported in that population during the same time interval. Very low birthweight infants are at greater risk of mortality and long-term disability than higher weight infants.

**Waterborne disease outbreak:** An incident in which two or more people experience a similar illness after consumption or use of water intended for drinking and a scientific investigation shows water as the source of illness.

**WIC:** Special Supplemental Food program for Women, Infants and Children. A federal food program which provides nutritional screening and nutrition counseling to eligible low income pregnant women, new or nursing mothers and children at risk. When medically necessary, WIC provides vouchers for nutritional food items, including cheese, eggs, milk and flour.

**Work-related injury:** Any injury incurred by a worker while on or off employer premises but engaged in work-related activities.

**Years of potential life lost (YPLL):** A statistical measure to enumerate premature death. It is calculated by subtracting an individual's age at death from a predetermined life expectancy.

**Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (YRBS):** a national survey conducted by phone interview that asks about behaviors and behavioral determinants.